

Appl. No. 09/840,296
Response dated: December 20, 2004

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 1-25 are pending. Claims 1-25 have been rejected as being anticipated by or obvious in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,049,525 ("Takahashi").

Claim 1 was rejected citing Figs. 4 and 8, col. 10, lines 26-65. However, Takahashi does not anticipate or render obvious optically coupling both the active fiber-bays and the redundant fiber-bay to the same optical fiber. Takahashi discloses and teaches the use of protection equipment that sends traffic over a protection fiber in the event of a failure of active/working equipment, see col. 10, lines 26-31 and Fig. 4 as cited in the Action. Takahashi is representative of the prior art, which introduces limitations into the network that have been overcome by the present invention.

The aforementioned distinctions are further exemplified by claim 8, which provides additional limitations involving service and protect optical fibers. Traffic from both active and redundant fiber-bays is switched to the protect fiber in the event of a protect fiber failure, separate from the switching between the active and redundant fiber-bays.

The differences between the claimed invention and Takahashi are significant in that the prior art requires the use of a protection fiber in the event of a failure of the equipment connected to the fiber rather than the fiber itself. Whereas, in the claimed invention, the network is configured such that the same fiber is used to transport signals from both the active and redundant equipment, whether that fiber be the working or protect fiber. This aspect of the invention is significant in that the network has secondary protection that will allow it to operate even after sustaining failure in multiple locations in the network, e.g., a fiber bay, and the service fiber. This aspect of the claimed invention is neither disclosed nor taught by the prior art.

In view of this response, Applicant believes that the claims are in condition for allowance, and respectfully requests that such action be taken. If the Examiner has any questions pertaining to this response or to the subject application in general, the Examiner is encouraged to contact the undersigned.

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Applicants believe that no additional fees are due with this response. However, the Commissioner is authorized to charge any fees, including those under 37 CFR 1.16 and 1.17, necessitated by this amendment and credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 500477.

Respectfully submitted,



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